

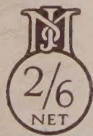


THE HUMAN PARSON

By the Rev. H. R. L. SHEPPARD,
Vicar of St. Martin-in-the-Fields.

In this volume Mr. Sheppard shows the true nature of a parson's life and work. He is more concerned with the spirit that animates the life than with the professional boundaries within which it is lived. The book is not addressed to the clergy, but they will find in it much that is inspiring in its simplicity.

THIRD



IMPRESSION



P.E. Martin

29 Ewell Park Way

Stoneleigh, EPSOM.

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With the Season's
Compliments and all
good wishes

JW South

Christmas 1924

THE HUMAN PARSON

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THE HUMAN PARSON

BY H. R. L. SHEPPARD

VICAR OF ST. MARTIN-IN-THE-FIELDS. HON. CHAPLAIN
TO H.M. THE KING

LONDON

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PREFACE

THIS book will doubtless appear rather desultory and in many respects incomplete.

I have no wish for it to escape criticism, but I should like to say here that I am only too conscious of the gaps and unfinished statements that will be obvious to all who read it.

It represents the substance of lectures on Pastoral Theology delivered at Cambridge. I had hoped to re-write and add chapters on such subjects as Public Worship, Parish Work, Doctrine and Practice, but the circumstances of a busy parochial life have prevented me fulfilling my purpose. I send this little book out in the hopes that it may possibly help one or two who are thinking of being ordained to a fresh idea of what a parson's job may be.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
	PREFACE	5
I.	THE OPPORTUNITY	7
II.	INTIMACY WITH JESUS	20
III.	HIS VALUES AND OUR VALUES	32
IV.	WORKING IT OUT IN DAILY LIFE	45
V.	THE SPHERE OF MEN AND WOMEN	68
VI.	ON PREACHING	75
VII.	NEW IDEALS IN PARISH WORK	88

THE HUMAN PARSON

CHAPTER I

THE OPPORTUNITY

THERE are two incidents that often come into my mind because of their vividness.

The first, in 1909, was on the top of a 'bus. On the afternoon of the day on which I was ordained a deacon I was travelling to my work in East London. There were two drunken working men as my near neighbours—the one had reached a stage that rendered him ferocious, the other was well disposed to a degree that was almost maudlin.

On catching sight of me the former remarked: "There's a —— parson!" but the other, full of genial intention, stopped him. "Now, George, don't blame him—it's not 'is fault. It's 'ard luck, that's what I says."

And the second was in September, 1914, in a hospital in France. I had gone to see a wounded officer who was dying of tetanus. As he turned and saw me, he exclaimed: "What the devil are you parsons doing out here?"

Of all the episodes that have happened to me since I was ordained I do not think any two have caused me to think more furiously.

After nineteen hundred years of Christian and Church history, the ordinary man (it is equally true of women) has no real conception of what a parson stands for or what our function is.

We are tolerated in the same way as a venerable institution is always tolerated in this country; for an innate reverence for what is quaint and old is one of its characteristics.

A procession of clergy on its way to a cathedral is to the crowd like the Lord Mayor's Show, entertaining but out-of-date and unreal; though, mark this, the one thing in the procession that is real to them—the carried Cross or Crucifix—they salute. In the heart of that crowd how much love or even awe is there? How much understanding is there of the things for which those clergy care most? If there is no contempt, there is at least profound indifference. They are not worth a cheer; far less are they worth molesting. Some would say they are even welcome as a caste, for how else could funerals or weddings or baptisms be done? Besides, have they not proved themselves admirably useful as official propaganda for the established order of things?

Here or there in the crowd is a man or woman who knows what we really want to be—but how few there are!

Surely Abraham Lincoln was right when he said that God liked "ordinary people" best because He made so many of them: yet how is it that to-day it is just these ordinary people who can think it "'ard luck" that there should

have to be members of my profession? How is it that an officer dying in agony can wonder "what the devil a parson is doing in the midst of that hell"?

Blame the ordinary people a little if you like—they may deserve it—but do not think of them as men and women who are hardening their hearts against God or goodness, or as people who have no respect or love for Jesus Christ. They are not saints nor would they wish to be thought of as such. But, on the whole, ordinary people are extraordinarily good folk with hearts of gold. No man who has lived with them these last nine years at home and abroad can doubt it. They have their faults and they have their virtues, and they are more ashamed of their virtues than their faults. They are lovable, humorous and kindly hearted. I do not think they are far from the Kingdom of God, but they do not know what on earth a parson stands for. Now and then they guess, and their guesses, which generally have to do with Sunday services, non-swearing, teetotalism and personal salvation, are very wide of the mark. On the whole they would suggest that we exist to try and make them unnatural now with a view to doing them good hereafter.

These are not clever guesses, but these ordinary people do not care for the clergy, and in proportion as they are uninterested they remain uninformed.

In whatever proportion we may decide to allot the blame as between clergy and laity,

this fact is beyond dispute—the ordinary layman has but the crudest idea of the reason for our existence.

To make the true reason obvious by clearing away the débris of irrelevancies that makes it so hard now for men to know and choose the paths of righteousness, to know what are and what are not the essentials of Christianity in international, national, personal and parochial life and to get them known—these are among the high tasks that await a new generation of clergy.

Here is no plea for so-called popular clergy or popular religion ; the reverse will probably be the case. To those who give their lives to these and other tasks there will come from men no mild indifference, no complacent patronage. They will not court unpopularity, but it may often be their lot : now ecclesiastical authority, now Capital, now Labour, will be fearful and angry.

There will be, at any rate, an end to men's indifference, and with some hatred and fear will come, I think, much gratitude and love. That will be very much to the good.

My endeavour in this book is to show of what spirit the parson must be if he desire to interpret his profession in any compelling way to his own generation, and to suggest how that spirit may be applied in the affairs that claim so much of his time.

All this will be the more difficult because we are considering a calling more exacting than any other. There is something to be said for

men nowadays not lightly deciding to be ordained. Bishops are wont to bemoan the fact that the Headmasters of our schools say that very few of their boys are looking forward to ordination. I am not at all sure that this is entirely to be regretted. No doubt, if the concern of the Church is still to plant some sort of a vicar and some sort of a curate in every parish in England, then, from the official point of view, the shortage of ordination candidates is appalling.

But I cannot help hoping that the new concern of the Church will be the careful selection of its ministers and their better training, not in efficiency so much as in morale ; that it will, in fact, be concerned with quality rather than with quantity, and that the time will come when the official mind will recognise that it is better for the souls of the people to shut up a church than to keep it open under the control of a man about whom even his best friends might say that he ought never to have been ordained.

I have sometimes wondered whether the people of England are not grossly spoilt in the facilities for religious services that are offered to them. I am certain it is so in large centres of population where nearly everyone can choose the kind of service, the kind of hour and the kind of parson that suits the exact condition of his religious leanings—perhaps we might read prejudice for leanings. It is different, of course, in the country, but even there one wonders whether it would not be immensely to

the good—in spite of the alienation of present churchwardens—to serve and visit small villages from large centres, rather than to carry on the present system, which is certainly to the good in some places, but woefully to the bad in many more. If we could rid our minds of our English idea that, in order to keep religion alive, full Mattins and full Evensong must of necessity be said every Sunday morning and evening in every parish church, we should be more ready to face the problem of the staffing of churches.

I am well aware that the taking of services (with the exception of the Eucharist) is, or ought to be, one of the lightest tasks to which the clergy are called, but, subconsciously in the official mind and consciously in the mind of the ordinary layman, the prejudice against closing a church is the objection to not having Mattins and Evensong said every Sunday. Added to this there is a very prevalent idea that the Eucharist on a week-day or in the evening is not of the same value as on a Sunday or in the early morning. This makes it appear impossible to feed the souls of the people unless the parson can celebrate the Holy Mysteries at 8.0 or at 12.30 on at least alternate Sundays.

Why is it that so many clergy who are perfectly content to celebrate the Holy Communion in the afternoon (that is at 12.30, when the atmosphere of the church is at its worst and church-people tired after Mattins) raise hands of horror at the suggestion of an evening

celebration at an hour distinct from the evening service and yet one most suited to probably sixty per cent of the parishioners?

I have digressed in trying to make my point, which is that there seems to me to be a good deal to be said for the fact that men are not lightly offering themselves for the hardest life-task that anyone can undertake—the task that begins with ordination.

One does not have to be despondent about the future of the Christian religion to realise that there is a very real religious reconstruction taking place in the minds of many thoughtful people—this is not limited to the young. They have a larger conception of the things that Jesus Christ cared about and came to teach. He is as real to them—perhaps more so than He ever was—but they are less anxious to define Him. I should be inclined to say that He has become so real, so great, and so many-sided that they feel, however great the necessity, the total inadequacy of attempting to say in a document, long or short, just what He is, for man has no celestial language. They are glad to retain the capital H, and to leave their definition at that. They fear that the official demand for any definition, which of necessity must be but partial, will tend to deny such light as is breaking in on men who see Him from other sides.

The conception of the Jesus of history as being so much larger than his Church is making many a thoughtful parson and layman profoundly uninterested in some of the questions

which seem of fundamental interest to the ecclesiastically minded.

It is possible to love one's Church passionately, and with an equal passion to believe in it, not perhaps exactly as it is but as it might be, and yet to feel that a great deal of its energy is at the moment being spent on work to which its Founder would attach little, if any, importance, and on the emphasising of matters which He might totally and even indignantly disregard.

What those matters are I shall endeavour to say later ; it is sufficient now to suggest that one result of the religious reconstruction to which we have alluded is to remind men, who desire whole-heartedly to serve God and their fellow-men, that there are other channels besides ordination through which they might give effective and unfettered service. This was not so twenty-five years ago.

Yet I am convinced that, provided only a man can capture for himself the spirit that is needful, there is no more glorious career and no greater channel of service than that which he may offer to God and his fellow-men through the Ministry of the Church.

To the man who has sought ordination primarily because of a desire to know God the Father through a greater intimacy with Jesus Christ so that more of His spirit may be released for the world's need, there will never come, without grave moral deterioration, any lasting regret for his decision, but rather, I believe, a growing sense of gladness that he

chose the happiest, if the most difficult, of all professions. There will, of course, be hours of depression and painful realisation of but the poorest achievement ; occasions when the light that once seemed so illuminating is denied ; times of intellectual doubt and difficulty for all who insist on remaining in the true sense free thinkers ; periods of wondering whether the work is worth while and whether the Church itself is worth preserving. Yet beneath all these passing storms of doubt and thought, there will grow a steady, persistent and ever-deepening belief that, given the right spirit, it is all abundantly worth while.

When the numerous critics of the Church have had their say, there is much to be said on the other side. With all its faults the Church has always stood for Jesus Christ : sometimes falteringly, sometimes fearlessly, it has held up before the eyes of men the historical figure of Jesus Christ. The world knows of Him because of the Church ; His name and His life story are more widely known than those of any other man. Men and women do find God through and in the Sacraments of the Society that claims to be of Him.

The Church has constantly supplied, and is still supplying, the leaders, the ideals and the impulses in all movements for the betterment of life and for freedom.

It does with all its weakness stand for the value of each human life and the significance of the individual—it could not do otherwise when its Founder died for him. In short, in

the words of Dr. Glover, words which I think might cover our branch of the Church :—

“ With all its failures, confusions and omissions, it has been the Church of Christ, and one proof of it is that the Church has achieved new forms from time to time at incalculable cost, and has been glad to do so for the sake of making clearer the mind of its Master. Jesus was right in His comparison of the Kingdom of God with leaven. The life within has never left the Church in what it might call peace and He would call death ; there have been disturbances, upheavals, divisions ; Church history is not pretty reading, but the leaven keeps working. There has been, and is, a terrific dead weight of dough for it to quicken, but a little fresh warmth from the sunshine of God in the face of Christ, and the whole mass heaves together with the pulse of life ; the great ideas revive and Jesus triumphs.”

I have seen it for myself when the Church in any particular place or parish has laid all its emphasis on Jesus Christ. It can satisfy ; its Bread and Wine do nourish, its fellowship does unite ; I know no alternative for offering Jesus Christ to ordinary folk. I know no society which has within it a larger spirit of Resurrection.

I have listened to all that its critics have to say and I agree with half of their criticism, and yet I am more and more convinced that the Church of Jesus Christ does possess the field in which the treasure lies, but alas ! the field is to ordinary people as a field

of professional ecclesiasticism in which they are very unlikely to wander.

The Church because it is a living thing has unsuspected powers of readjustment without losing its life ; its death is not prophesied so easily now as it used to be, at least not by thoughtful people.

Many have tried to kill it ; it has looked easy, yet it has been found impossible.

"Sire," said Theodore Beza to the King of Navarre, "it belongs in truth to the Church of God, in the name of which I speak, to receive blows and to give them, but it will please your Majesty to take notice that it is an anvil that has worn out many hammers." That is a profound and, I believe, a spiritual truth, and although in my weakest moments I (possibly like you) have despaired of my Church, yet it is my most passionate belief, when I think and when I read history, that there are no heights to which it might not rise—if only it dared.

For myself I am prouder of nothing than that I am permitted to be a humble official of a Society that might save the soul of the world and bring endless joy to the hearts of mankind.

I know that to some the official actions of clergy who think as I do appear from time to time as disloyal to the letter of the Church's law, while others find it hard to understand how, holding the views we do, we are still content to use official forms which we earnestly desire altered and perform official ceremonies which have very little but good intention to be said for them. For myself I can only say that

wherever possible, in and sometimes out of season, I urge the most radical reform of many of the Church's ceremonies and formularies, and beyond that I dare to believe my Master will understand and pardon what seems insincere if He knows that the real purpose of my ministry be to make Him known and loved of men, and to do what I humbly can from within His Society to make it more worthy of His Presence.

This that I claim for myself, trusting in His understanding, I believe would help many a man to be ordained if he can feel as I do and claim the same understanding for himself.

Again, the most exhilarating experience to men in my profession is the ever-increasing proof that what they dared to hope on the eve of their ordination is actually and gloriously true, namely, that Jesus, the Master of the art of life, is indeed the satisfaction of a world of men and women—at heart incurably religious. Year by year this certainty increases. If one may so express it, He never misses fire ; He baffles often ; He eludes often ; He goes on ahead ; yet for those who ask and seek, He is not only the Way, but He is with them on the way ; we cannot fail to see this if we watch and pray as we must.

It is the lot of men in my profession to be used in the great planning of God. I believe we are allowed to help a little, to encourage a little, to love a great deal. I believe that we can by the very nature of our commission and communion feed the souls and bodies and minds

of men to their Lord's satisfaction. I believe that we can enlist men for active service against all that is contrary to the mind of Jesus and hold them faithful in that service.

Finally, I believe that the function of the clergy in this great day is not to dogmatise, but to become themselves pilgrims with all thoughtful men on the road that leads to truth, walking themselves in such light as comes to them from the Cross on which their Master died for truth—and asking for further truth themselves.

Ours is a great life—rather, it may be a great life, but its strength and power depend not on an automatic authority laid upon our heads by episcopal hands, but in our own persistent attempt to know God as men's Father and to capture the spirit of Jesus Christ to this end and for the world's need.

If that spirit can be ours, then we shall be able to make plain to ordinary men and women why we are what we are, and what are the essentials of Christianity. Our profession is unique alike in its opportunities as in the Cross it offers and the joy it brings.

CHAPTER II

INTIMACY WITH JESUS

WE come now to our most difficult task—the endeavour to describe the one gift essential—that subtle quality which I have called the Spirit of Jesus. It is easier to recognise than to define.

It must be acknowledged that our weakest spot lies in the region of morale. If that was improving as quickly as our machinery, all would be well, but as a matter of fact it is not. It is unquestionably weaker. While it remains so, there can be no general progress. There are to-day, within the Church, a series of groups of men and women and a number of Churches, where the spirit of reverent experiment and progress in thought and action is not lacking, but there is little sign of advance along the whole front.

The authorities are alive to the need—they are indeed, as a whole, unusually progressive so far as men can go who have decided that, as a general rule, Statesmanship rather than Leadership should be their primary function. I am not quarrelling with that decision, only recording it. Now and then, the Bishops, as a

whole, give a lead to their followers. Certainly, we were told that after a great spiritual experience at Lambeth in 1921, the Bishops of the Anglican Communion were led of God to great decisions. We believed that absolutely, and we rejoiced in the noble summons which they issued to all Christian people. One may, however, be permitted to ask why, when they met organised opposition within their Diocesan Conferences, not a few Bishops failed to stand firm for the things that had seemed to them in Council to be the direct leading of God. But, as a rule, little Leadership can be expected from Authority beyond suggesting a skirmish here and there to people who are willing to mistake a skirmish for a battle. After all, it is immensely difficult to be a leader, and it is not much good calling an advance if your followers are likely to hold back.

It has been said, and I fear with a good deal of truth, that religion which once went before the human race as a torch showing it the way in its march through history is fast becoming an ambulance in the rear of progress concerned mainly with picking up the stragglers who have fallen by the way. This, indeed, is a useful and a Christ-like work, but it is not merely for this that the Church exists.

One test of morale is the spirit within the Churches themselves. "If things are well with the Churches," says Dr. Cairns, "they will be full of the spirit of life and adventure, of experiment and adaptability." These things are, as a general rule, conspicuously absent, as, too,

are others that are equally necessary, fellowship, reality, simplicity and, above all, perhaps the application of consecrated common sense to the Church's services. Men and women have some right to expect in their parish church what can only be described by that hard-worked word "atmosphere." They do not find there an atmosphere as if some great business was on hand. They do not catch hold of what they need to sustain them in the difficult and complicated art of Christian living. They find no real song of praise, no summons to high thinking and adventure.

I am afraid it is not far from the truth to say that all too often the most virile are finding what they have of passion for goodness and humanity more readily satisfied at League of Nations and Labour Meetings, or in the numerous Temples of new thought and theosophy, that would never have been raised had the Church's morale been higher. There is borne in on me the uncomfortable conviction that these people are not leaving the Churches because of what is worst in them, but because of what is best, because they cannot believe that a Society so cold, so lifeless, so faint-hearted, can ever be as a torch going before the human race to light it in its march through history. They have little use just now for an ambulance. I remember, as if it was yesterday, Father Stanton—of blessed memory—(and those who are likely to follow him in his Catholicism will do well to follow him also in his Evangelical love for souls) almost leaping

into his pulpit at S. Alban's, Holborn, and shouting at a vast congregation, "Fire, Fire, Fire!" and then just when a panic was about to begin, he went on, "Everywhere, everywhere except in the Church of England as by law established."

I am well aware that I am giving a rather gloomy view of my beloved Church, but without facing the situation as it actually is, it is impossible to realise the great gulf which, please God, some of us may help to bridge between what might be and what actually is. But at the same time there is another side to the picture. Here and there in cathedral and town and village one stumbles upon the real thing as upon an oasis in the desert. Here you see how wonderful a thing the Church of Christ can be: a neighbourhood sweetened by the influence of the Church—a people whose hearts are aflame with the love of God, whose minds are stimulated to larger thought and Christian achievement. Life is actually nobler and cleaner under the shadow of those spires, and the men and women who have come to love their Church and its Altar are actually putting a little more into the common stock of life than they are taking out of it. There is a definite religion at work there, though it may not be of the kind the word denotes to Church ears, for it is not limited to one complexion of churchmanship. It is as likely to happen in an Anglo-Catholic Church as it is in an Evangelical (I do not like these words of contrast, which never seem to me fair to either side, but I

know no other way of expressing my meaning). It is still more likely to be found where the vicar would rather not be called either High or Low, he has a profound dislike for ecclesiastic labels, so people who don't know what is going forward call him vague, yet there the truths that are strongest and most beautiful on either side are welded into one irresistible appeal.

I have happened, too, on this reality in country villages whose vicars are engaged mostly in kindness outside the Church. With all the will in the world they do not find it easy to talk naturally about the Master Who inspires them, with the result that they would be called unspiritual by that type of person, all too often earnest communicants, who find it easy to say who is spiritual and who is not.

What is the secret of this Wind of God which comes so often one knows not whence, and goes one knows not whither? It is easy to recognise it, but it is as hard to define it as it is to calculate its power. It is indeed inscrutable, incalculable.

What is the secret? I believe it is progressively revealed, and its power is progressively available, to those who are learning to lay more and more emphasis on Jesus Christ. That to Dr. Glover is the most striking and outstanding fact in history. "For those," he says, "who believe, as we all do at heart, that the World is rational, and that real effects follow real causes, and conversely that behind great movements lie great forces, the fact must

weigh enormously that wherever the Christian Church, or a section of it, or a single Christian has put upon Jesus Christ a higher emphasis, above all, where everything has been centred in Jesus Christ, there has been an increase of power for Church, or community or man. Where new value has been found in Jesus Christ, the Church has risen in power, in energy, in appeal, in victory. . . . On the other hand, where, through a nebulous philosophy, men have minimised Jesus, or where, through some weakness of the human mind, they have sought the aid of others and relegated Jesus Christ to a more distant, even if a higher sphere—where, in short, Christ is not the living centre of everything, the value of the Church has declined, its life has waned.”

In my judgment, no truer words were ever written. For us who desire a greater intimacy with Christ that we may capture more of His spirit for the World’s needs, these words are of the supremest importance. The secret of a life that can be used of God will be sensitiveness to Jesus Christ. An attempted intimacy with Him must precede every other consideration. He will be the centre—all else the circumference. Without Him our belief that God is love is by no means axiomatic. With Him there can come that massive faith in God and His goodness upon which His whole life and death were staked.

In these tolerant days there is too great a tendency to sentimentalise the life story of Jesus. He is often presented as one whose

especial claim to our consideration lies in a nature that was extraordinarily kind-hearted. It would appear that His tenderness to prostitutes and outcasts was the basis of His claim on the world's attention. We all love that tender, understanding side of the Lord's human nature. What Jesus really did was to change the thought of mankind about God. Since Jesus lived, God has become another Being, and one nearer to man. He has become lovable. All through the centuries Jesus has been interpreting God to man—making the human heart larger, more human and more apt to get hold of God. He is our God. It is a measure of that Spirit we desire, and of that massive faith in the purpose of God to draw all men who are willing to Himself that we desire to capture for the world's need.

This is the reason for our attempted intimacy with Jesus Christ. That intimacy is first of all humanising—it allows us to understand human nature as we never did before. There comes with it a growing respect for every man and woman such as He had. We begin really to believe in men. As we see our function now it is not always to be teaching, upbraiding, admonishing, but rather listening and learning as the servants of men on their pilgrim way.

There will also come that amazing sensitiveness to man's every need that belonged to the love of Jesus. And we shall get from Him something of His genius for friendship and the instinct for what was essential. We shall know

whom our poor human love can help, and what to stress and what need not be stressed, as we stammer out the message that we would give. Ours, too, will be that natural compelling love for the world's failures which made men and women happy in our Master's company even while they most feared His white-hot purity. And there may come to us some of that easy grace and spontaneity of spirit that can come to those who, like Him, have earned the right to speak in a Gethsemane of prayer—hidden from the sight of man.

We shall not discount humour in the Service of God—we shall not use jargon, nor many technical terms, nor tricks of oratory, nor flights of rhetoric, but we shall speak as He did in the dialect of the human heart. And yet at times there will be an echo in our speech of that passionate withering anger that burst from His lips, not when He Himself was insulted, but when the least of these little ones was offended or treated with less than mercy and justice. Only from a heart aflame with human love could such awful anger proceed.

Jesus will have become to us not the conclusion of an argument or a dogma or a legend, but a living abiding Personality nearer than hands or feet. He will be a Man, too—a carpenter—not a being playing at being a carpenter, but an actual carpenter—an expert in the art of actual living.

And all beautiful things will speak of Him as He speaks of God. Birds, trees and flowers, red sunsets. We shall not come to our fullest

faith by "the grinding of general laws out of observed instances." Poetry and art and music will supplement our reasoning—instinct will sometimes carry us safely where intelligence is afraid to tread. William de Morgan describes, in a wonderful passage, the effect of a sonata of Beethoven on a man without special musical gifts or knowledge, in an hour of desolation and despair. It convinced him in its own way. It conveyed to him assurance which nothing else could convey, "I have ever since regarded the latter (Beethoven) not so much as a composer as a Revelation." How often have I said to myself after some perfectly convincing phrase of Beethoven, "Of course, if that is so, there can be no occasion to worry." It could not be translated, of course, into vulgar grammar or syntax, but it left no doubt on the point for all that.

If the mystical intuitions that come from art and poetry and music give more power to life, they must be welcomed as being among the things that lead to God. And any new light that comes into the world and is proved to be true, will be of Him, I believe. Again and again, it has been proved that the new science or the new knowledge or the new psychology that made the timid fearful because it seemed "dangerous" to the Gospel of Christ has nothing in it that was not implicit in the spirit of the Jesus of history.

But most easily will He be found in simple people and simple surroundings and homely things, and especially in ordinary bread and

ordinary wine, when two or three are gathered together in His name.

And no one can be hopeless, for none was hopeless to Him, and no one can be outside the scope of His tenderest attention. (It is for this reason that I would rather resign my orders than ever refuse the Communion to anyone who was willing and able to say, "Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief.")

We shall not be too interested in high speculations and the arguments of contending schools. Luther has something to say about this. "Whenever thou art occupied in the matter of thy salvation, setting aside all curious speculations of God's unsearchable majesty, all cogitations of works of traditions, of philosophy, yea, and of God's law, too, run straight to the manger and embrace this infant and the Virgin's little babe in thine arms and behold Him as He was born, growing up conversant among men, teaching, dying, rising again, ascending up above all the heavens and having power above all things. By this means shalt thou be able to shake off all terrors and errors like as the sun driveth away the clouds." Or, again :

"Begin thou to seek God there where Christ Himself began. He that without danger will know God and will speculate of Him, let him look first into the manger—that is, let him begin below. . . . Afterwards he will finely learn to know who God is. As then the same knowledge will not affright but it will be most sweet, loving and comfortable. But take good

heed (I say) in any case of high-climbing cogitations to clamber up to Heaven without this ladder—namely the Lord Christ in His humanity.”

If there be an intimacy maintained between Jesus Christ and us, Religion will become so much simpler than it used to be—so much bigger, but so much more real and universal. Yet all the while the Cross is there, but a Cross inseparable from joy, for as there is no real conflict between Jesus, the Man of Sorrows, and Jesus, the Man of Joy, so there need be none for us between our hours of sorrow and our hours of gladness, for “He who lives more lives than one, more deaths than one, must die.” You cannot have the joy without the sorrow. So men who look to Jesus shall find, I believe,

That one face far from vanish, rather grows
Or decomposes but to recompose,
Becomes my universe that feels and knows.

I will never believe that all this is mere sentiment and emotion. It is asking for all that is best and most strenuous in man. Nor can I for one instant accept the criticism that a religion completely grounded on the Person of Jesus, and on Him alone, can be vague or mystically unreal or disloyal to the Society which was instituted solely, so far as I can understand, to maintain a relationship of friendship and service between men and their Lord and Master.

I have tried here, all inadequately, to describe

that essential gift which I call the Spirit of Christ, which, if a man capture for himself and the world's needs, is as a joy and an offering beyond compare.

If this at heart be their real endeavour, that special urging that sometimes drives men even against their will towards ordination, then there are no barriers, intellectual or otherwise, that need hold them back, and there is no limit to what God might not choose to do through them.

If that be so, as it must be, so long as we can maintain by constant and disciplined thought and prayer and careful study an intimacy with Jesus which issues in the doing of His will, men will take note of us that we have been with Jesus and they will have no doubt as to why we are what we are, and what are the essentials for Christian living.

CHAPTER III

HIS VALUES AND OUR VALUES

LAYMEN expect the clergy to be almost perfect, and they are often bitterly disappointed. They are apt to forget that clergy can only be recruited from laymen.

The most careless layman looks for a very high standard in his parson, partly because he is still labouring under the superstition that the act of ordination removes a man, as if by magic, from temptations which are the lot of ordinary mortals, and partly because he does still believe (consciously or unconsciously) that Christianity can and should ennoble the lives of those who profess it. This latter is, of course, a tribute to our profession. The parson is watched and discussed with the closest attention, much more than he realises, and often by people whom he least suspects of being interested, since they do not attend church.

If intellectual doubt has slain the faith of hundreds, the moral failure of the clergy to live up to the standard which the layman expects has slain its thousands. The greatest religious difficulty of to-day is, of course, the unsatisfactory lives of professing Christians. We may

well protest that it is little short of monstrous that the cause we stand for should be discounted because of our imperfections. We may point out—with a good deal of truth—how often men use our failings as an excuse for their own continued lethargy. Yet when all is said, it is well to remember the situation as it actually is, and to recognise that the vast majority of those who desire to investigate the claims of Jesus Christ will, as a matter of fact, begin with a very searching investigation of the lives of those whose main business it is to expound those claims. After all, it is not surprising that men who so frequently hear us declaring that Christianity does work quite extraordinarily well in the affairs of daily life, should look to us for a pretty vigorous practical demonstration. Every day there are those who are being led to or from Jesus Christ by what they discover in the workaday life of His followers and especially of the clergy. In one sense we can never be off duty. We cannot expect to plant the Kingdom of God anywhere unless it has first taken root very firmly in our own individual heart. This is, of course, a platitude, but we must beware of coming to think that what we lack in nobility of character can be atoned for by bustling activity or eloquent speech, or the correctness of our Church views.

“ Lord, is it I ? ” is about the most wholesome enquiry that we can make as we go to break bread with our Lord. It is beyond dispute the business of every parson to trans-

form his own life until—all unconsciously—it is capable of giving out the same kind of music that Jesus made in Galilee and Jerusalem. It is that music which still allures the world even while it fails to understand it. It is because it is so seldom heard that the world remains perplexed and dazed and life goes on songless and unsanctified. In passing, it is a strange thing to reflect that with all our shibboleths and professional jargon—with all the sickly and grotesque portrayal of our Master in so much of our modern speech and art and song—we have never yet succeeded in making Him ridiculous. The bitterest opponent of the Church has neither the inclination nor the opportunity of ridiculing Jesus Christ. We are never abused or laughed at for being like Him. We are discounted because we are so unlike Him.

Jesus, by universal consent, stands alone—unique, in history. Someone has truly said it would be a fault of taste rather than a blasphemy to bracket Him with the other great men of history. Dr. Glover has put it finely : “ There is no figure in human history that signifies more. Men may love Him or hate Him, but they do it intensely. If He was only what some say, He ought to be a mere figure of antiquity by now. But He is more than that. Jesus is not a dead issue ; He has to be reckoned with still, and men who are to treat mankind seriously must make the intellectual effort to understand the Man on Whom has been centred more of the interest and the passion of the most serious and the best of

mankind than on any other. The real secret is, that human nature is deeply and intensely spiritual, and that Jesus satisfies it at its most spiritual point."

That is our Master.

It is beyond dispute the business of any parson to attempt to obtain something of the Master's certain touch on life, and to practise the art of living under His direction. The world will be at the feet of those who are themselves at the feet of Jesus Christ—that is the surest thing I know.

I do not think this will remain as unpractical and mystic as it sounds now if you will bear with me a little longer.

To me, the one thing of supreme importance for men of our profession is, that we should catch the spirit of Jesus Christ. It will be well or ill with the Church of Christ in proportion as we succeed or fail. That spirit moves upon the world—it is available, but not in its fulness without the most careful and disciplined thought and prayer.

It is rather a dangerous thing to believe in God—incredibly wicked and stupid things have been done by men who thought themselves inspired of God. What really matters is the kind of God we believe in. When Mr. Studdert Kennedy was asked what God was like, he pointed to a Crucifix. He could do no better—that is the Christian's answer. The Christian God is like Jesus Christ. There are very many professing Christians who have yet to learn this. Their God, so it at least appears, is more

like Thor, or some Eastern potentate, than Jesus Christ. Alas! many of the services of the Book of Common Prayer contain passages which are untrue in their representation of the character of God, and are definitely un-Christian.

I doubt if anything like half the members of the Church of England, or of any other Christian Church, attempt to think of God and His outlook on men and affairs in terms of Jesus Christ. Our faith says, Jesus=God and God=Jesus, but we have repeated that so often that we have lost sight of its tremendous implications. The Church does not attempt to base its life now on that fundamental of the Christian revelation. Were it to do so, it would shed many of its members, as well as its establishment, but it would conquer the world as easily as that first little company of red-hot Christians conquered the might of Rome. Mr. Chesterton is true—"Christianity has not been tried and found wanting, it has been found difficult and not tried."

The fact that God=Jesus Christ is the great contribution of Christendom to man's age-long search into the character of God. That is the belief we must dare to stake all on—that and no less is Christianity. It is this that is meant to give the Christian his new scale of values, his new outlook on men and affairs.

Yet it is hard beyond words to know God as we would wish, for Jesus Christ is hard to know; He is not to be known—in the sense that we need to know Him—by a mere familiarity with all that the Gospels tell us. They make us

eager, but they do not satisfy. They ask us questions as well as answer them.

It is not only by His spoken Word that men come to special intimacy with the Will of God. The "Come to Jesus" of the mission preacher is all too often but an invitation to a partial intimacy. He is not fully known in a mere comfortable reclining on His promises of comfort and consolation in adverse circumstances. Men, too, have brought their own prejudices with them as they sought to know Him, and have only found in Him what they were looking for—a revolutionary, a social reformer, a miracle worker, a physician, a kind-hearted philanthropist, an Oriental potentate, an upholder of the established order, and sometimes, apparently, even the first Anglican clergyman.

We have so often looked to Jesus to see what He was going to do for us, what miracle of mercy or fortune He was about to bestow, and so looking we have not seen. In our search for God as He is known in Jesus Christ, we remain blind until we have forgotten our own needs and hopes and wishes. Mr. Clutton Brock has pointed out in this connexion, that if a man goes to listen to Beethoven so that the great composer may do him good—cure his toothache, for instance—he will not hear Beethoven at all. This truth is supremely true about our Lord. We shall not be on the high road to any effective intimacy with Him until we seek Him for Himself. The story of the Syro-Phœnician woman has much to teach us. She brought her sorrow to our Lord, but, so

the story runs, "He answered her not a word." Then she did the one thing possible, "Behold she worshipped." She pressed through His silence into His presence. Later she knew. This is not easy—for most of us it is a big task. It needs all that we have of disinterested and disciplined thought and prayer, and even then, in the evening of life, we shall still know how little we know.

But curiously enough, all the effort is abundantly worth while, and we know it on the day we begin.

Already there is enough light to move by—enough faith to trade with. But it is the whole of Jesus Christ that we seek intimacy with. We want to know Him as He was on the road to Emmaus, as well as in Galilee: as He has been in history and in the experience of men in all ages: as He is to-day still revealing the mind of God on the sorrows and sins of a world bankrupt through following its own will.

There is one thing, I believe, we shall soon discover—His values are really our values, too. The men He blesses are those we bless, too. His desire for our world and for us are what we—at our best moments—also desire.

He is not, as men so often think, interested in laying down the laws of an arbitrary god who has strange fancies and curious ideas of morality. He wishes to make men natural—not unnatural. He offers an overflowing vitality. More and more, I believe, we shall marvel as we come to see how practical was the teaching of Jesus Christ. We shall find it to

be the amazing answer to man's most persistent and practical problem, "How can I, being what I am, become what I know I ought to be? How can I live true to my own deepest and noblest aspirations?"

The Church that is most faithful to its Lord will be mainly concerned in giving with power its Lord's answer; it will be as practical as He was. In such terms it will explain the Third Person of the Trinity—its sacraments and its dogmas. But this discovery presupposes a "coming to Jesus" without any thought of personal advantage. That is the one condition imposed upon those who would create and maintain an intimacy with Him. It is the pure in heart (i.e. the disinterested) who shall see God. It is our main business to see God through Jesus Christ and for His own sake. To me there is a certain quality of life that should issue naturally, spontaneously, through such adventures and through our profession.

In a sentence it will be a life of cross-bearing, but a life also shot through with human interests and the gaiety of a Franciscan joy. It is the part of a great artist to produce his talent without any apparent effort. As one listens to the finished lecturer, or hears the great musician, one's instinct is to think how easy it is. There seems to be no straining—surely anyone could do it! We forget the hours of work and weariness, the periods of ceaseless work and practice that have achieved that finished and effortless perfection. Artists do not speak of the Cross—they call it drudgery.

We are proud to call it the Cross. To us it is much greater than drudgery, and equally hard, but much more effective. When we talk of the Cross and cross-bearing and remind ourselves of the place it must always have in our lives, we surely mean a cross that once accepted and embraced, ennobles and creates—not a cross that restricts, cramps and represses. We mean that the Cross, which in one sense is disciplined drudgery, is far more powerful even than the midnight oil of the embryo artist, and its purpose the creation of artists in Christianity—among whom it is our business to be numbered. The Cross, like the Truth, makes us free—free to make the song of our Lord heard in the land. That song will be infinitely human, attractive, compelling and effortless because of its background which men call drudgery, but we call the Cross of man's radiance. If then the disciple can maintain a constant conversation with his Lord, the greatest of all gifts will be inevitably his. It will be as natural to him to love as to breathe.

There is nothing so distressing to watch, or indeed, to receive, as that kind of official love which is sometimes bestowed by the clergy, and more often still by church-workers, on their people—and especially on the poor. They seem to have determined that it is part of their professional duty to love, and so they love because they must.

They seem like those who are keeping a resolution, made that morning, that, whether they feel like it or not, the people shall be loved

that day, say from half-past two to a quarter past five, and that resolution is being kept against all comers. May we for ever be preserved from loving officially. I wonder whether this attitude is responsible for the fact that "dearly beloved brethren" which ought to be very real is so often made a butt, for human official love deceives no one. It wins no answering response—how could it? It is altogether unlovely. It has its own set smile, its own unctuous greeting, its own familiar phrases, it is turned on and off conventionally. It leaves no impression of real love—it rings false.

But love in its highest manifestation is the richest, most persuasive, loveliest, nicest thing that God has to offer—it is the only weapon we need.

It is full of understanding—it knows how easy it is to sin, how difficult to live nobly. It sees with the eyes of those it loves. It never makes quick, harsh judgments. It gets to the heart of a situation as nothing else. It thinks in terms of men and women and children, and never in terms of "hands" or statistics. It prefers to give itself to the individual. It shuns expression on public platforms. It has no ulterior object except to serve. It would gladly lead if it could—it would never drive. It asks nothing for itself, but it is human enough to long for love in return. It knows when to speak and when to be silent, when to be patient and when to be impatient. It is at home with all sorts and conditions of men and

women and children, and it makes them laugh, for it has a real vein of humour. It gives and gets a joy in loving. It believes in all men and women. There is no such word as "hopeless" within its vocabulary. It feels ; it is sensitive to the moods of all to whom it is given. It is never clumsy, and yet it often steps in where angels fear to tread. Perhaps its greatest characteristic is its power to understand. It anticipates man's needs ; it can see a situation sometimes before it occurs ; it has an almost superhuman instinct for what ought to be done and how to do it. It knows what is in the heart of man. It is not always declaring itself. Like all creative forces, its best work is done in quietness. It prefers action to speech, it would prefer to visit someone in want to making any oration on fellowship. It likes best to do small things that no one else has seen need doing. It sees sorrow where sorrow is thought to be hidden, and virtue and grandeur where it is least expected. It is for ever on the watch for those who need it. It runs to give itself as the father ran to the prodigal child, not because he pitied, but because he couldn't do without his son. It washes the disciples' feet as He did because it wants to—not because there is a lesson in humility to be taught. It is like a window through which can be heard all the cries of the market-place without. It knows no barrier of rank or class, of creed or colour. It overflows the boundary of its own denomination—no official channels can hold it entirely. It flows, perhaps, most tenderly to those who

never enter church, and care little for the love of God. It sees the crown of their need on their foreheads and longs to be of service.

It is always courteous, especially to women. It knows that He Who is Love had a Mother ; it recognises that, save for the faith and moral courage of women, it would indeed have gone hard with His Cause. It suffers no slighting things to be said of them. It respects them too much. It grieves and is silent when they fail. It is courteous—this Love—to older people and quite young people, too. It likes them to say what they feel. It enters a slum dwelling with as much respect as it enters the lordly mansion. It could not patronise if it tried—it understands too much. It is generous, yet strong in controversy. It seeks to win without wounding—it never descends to personal abuse, or bitter speech. It is sometimes angry, for there is nothing sickly or sentimental about it. It is never shocked. When it is angry it is because another is hurt—in soul, or mind, or body. It knows nothing of jealousy—it rejoices in another's success. It is never petty or mean. It has all things in their right proportion. It is ever seeking to disentangle itself from irrelevancies.

It learns more in listening than in speech. It is never sarcastic, for it knows that by such means no soul was ever won. It is the property of no clique—it wears no ecclesiastical badge.

It cares nothing for its own status—there is nothing professional about it. It is not always trying to buy up the opportunity, to point the

lesson, and draw the moral. Above all, its faith in God is massive. It is confident always that in the end darkness must flee before the light.

This love which comes of God through Jesus Christ is the one weapon we need. If we who are to serve in the Society of Christ could possess it from a constant conversation with our Lord, we shall not have lived in vain.

Men who see it will know from whence it comes, and they will give praise to God Who can do such great things. They will also know why we are what we are and what are the essentials of Christianity.

CHAPTER IV

WORKING IT OUT IN DAILY LIFE

WE come now to the parson's actual work which we have seen demands a certain spirit. Our work is many-sided—there is no boundary to it. That makes it very interesting and very difficult. It is not what it is commonly supposed to be. It is thought by most people that we are busy at Christmas and Easter and on Sundays, and then pretty free for the rest of the year. Sunday is spoken of as our "busy day," and people who make polite conversation to us around the Festivals usually suggest that "of course, this is your busy time." As a matter of fact, for the parson who is trying to do his job, the Sundays are easier than the week-days. Week-days make larger demands, and they count more. Every day in the week there is the same need of a high morale. We must be as fit as we can for the work in hand. We must make the right sort of beginning to the day. For us, it consists in a contemplation of our Lord. When we were children we were told to let our first and last thoughts each day be about our Lord. We seldom did it, except sometimes in the evening when we were frightened of the dark.

It will be well if we can begin now to make that recommendation a practice. We shall make it more definite, so that it has psychological as well as devout significance, by attempting to fill our minds with the thought of God's power and of our power through Him to know His Will and to do it. We shall think how that could affect the tasks that we have to do, and what difference it ought to make to our own personal life and our relationship with the people who touch our life. We shall determine with God's help not to live that day below our maximum; not to tire when we need not tire; not to fail when we need not fail; not to be fearful where no fear is. It will sometimes help very much to choose some passage from the life of our Lord, like, for instance, the story of the blind man appealing to Him for succour, and to let the whole scene get hold of our mind. Quietly and without strain we shall build up the picture in our mind's eye. There is our Lord passing by, and there is humanity coming to Him, only half-believing, yet hopeful. Then with equal simplicity we shall become the blind man and Jesus the same Jesus yet God, and we shall tell how we wish to be altered and healed, and then we shall *know* that He is able, and later we shall find how true it is. And then the world of men we know will become in our thoughts as the blind man, and Jesus will do with them as with us, and so we shall begin our day with a sense of the power and love of God pressing upon the world, Jesus of Nazareth still passing by.

And then there will be our prayers. No one can tell another exactly how he ought to pray, but there will be the lifting up of ourselves and our friends to God. Prayer for us will not be a series of acts finished and completed each day at certain times. There must be, of course, times of disciplined prayer, but we shall endeavour to deepen the whole idea of prayer until it becomes a constant attitude—independent of prayer-desk or bedside—of being sensitive to God. It will become natural to talk reverently to God through Jesus Christ about every single thing that our sense of fitness tells us is worthy of His attention. And often we shall speak to Him about Himself, thanking Him for what He is, and for the hope and gladness that He has given. I think that when possible it is best to make our regular prayer in church, or at least, in some room where quiet is guaranteed and there is some picture of our Lord, or a Crucifix. It tends to help us in control and concentration. The danger of the new and, I believe, the true conception of prayer is that we are more likely to star-gaze than to agonise. We love to think that our prayers are at their best under the blue sky, or on a 'bus, or in our own home. There are rare souls about whom, no doubt, this is true ; but for most of us who are human, it is not. "Blue domers," as a rule, are too much distracted by the blue sky to pray, and those people who say they do not hold with church, they prefer to worship in their own home, are usually too much distracted by the noise and

cares around them to worship at all. The ideal is, I think, that we should grow to be independent of our surroundings, but most of us have not reached that stage. St. Augustine, in a rather delicious confession, tells us how his prayers may be disturbed if he catches sight of a lizard snapping up flies on the wall of his room—certainly mine would be. I am sure it is best to say the bulk of what I would call our organised prayer in some place like the church, or in some corner of a room that is arranged specially for the purpose.

When we do go to church, either for public or private prayer, it is entirely essential that we should arrive at the time we decided overnight. I think it is unpardonable for us to make a habit of being late when we either conduct, or are present at, a church service. One of the most dangerous temptations attached to our profession comes from the fact that we are, to a great extent, our own master—the keeper of our own time-table. We badly need supervision when we are young. It is of the utmost importance that we should expect from ourselves the same punctuality as the most exacting business man would expect from his junior clerks. Inertia, laziness, over-indulgence in sleep and slacking are simply soul-destroying to any parson. I am sure it is well that we should make the most stringent rule to be in church at least five minutes before any service, at which we are to officiate or at which we are to be present, is timed to begin; and this rule, especially with regard to the Holy Eucharist,

ought, if possible, never to be broken. If it is positively indecent, as I think it is, to arrive panting, breathless and late for public worship, it is equally indecent, to my thinking, to arrive untidy and (in the early morning) unshaved. We are not expected to be smart, but at least we can be clean, and it seems to be monstrous that we should be less tidy at the Altar than we should be in a friend's house ; but I am afraid it is not unknown for a man—who might think it very wrong to indulge in an early morning cup of tea—to be celebrating the Holy Mysteries within ten minutes of being called. When this happens, morale is at its weakest. These things count more than we realise. Decency and order are not to be confined to the performance of ritual—untidiness and slackness mean something is wrong.

It is thought nowadays rather out of date for the clergy to read (unless at public services) their morning and evening office. For myself, I only know this, that I am more alert for the tasks in hand, more responsive (I think) to the leadings of the Spirit when I am constant and regular in the performance of this disciplined control. But let me frankly add that I often make alterations in the office—changing, for instance, the first lesson and refusing to read those psalms that express a perfectly heathen delight in a god who—so far as I can see—has no relation to Jesus Christ. I never will repeat in public or in private such a sentence as “Blessed is the man who taketh the children and dasheth them against the stones.” Such

words represent so primitive a form of morality as to appear to express perfectly immoral sentiments : it seems unutterable humbug and nonsense that we should be advised to give it " a spiritual interpretation." But having said all this, let me make an old-fashioned plea that the clergy should read every morning and evening, unless prevented by some work of mercy and charity, the amended offices of morning and evening prayer. I cannot, however, recommend the practice of a friend of mine whom I caught one night reading in succession the offices for the four preceding evenings which he had neglected.

It is impossible to overstress the importance of intelligent study. We must read and not merely live in the neighbourhood of books. We must be intelligent as well as zealous. We are constantly giving out, and our givings will become painfully thin and weak unless we are constantly refreshing our minds at the best sources of knowledge. Sidney Smith once said that he would rather meet a roaring lion in a narrow path than a well-intentioned man who was ignorant. We must at least be as well informed as the average intelligent layman, and no parochial activities can excuse a mind barren of thought and a study table which holds nothing heavier than a book of " Little Sermons for every Sunday in the Christian Year."

If we could aim at knowing the text of the Bible as well as, say, our forefathers knew it—the New Testament well enough to quote, the

Gospels well enough to catch the whole spirit of Him who pervades it—we shall do well enough to go on with.

We have to know the faith we hold, constantly to reconstruct it in the light of new and approved knowledge, and we have to lay it before our hearers in a form both intelligent and recognisable as the result of much fair thinking.

There are words of Bishop Gore in the first volume of his book, "Belief in God," which we might do well to lay to heart. He is talking of the revision of religious belief that is now going on in men's minds. "There is no class for whom this process of fundamental reconstruction of their beliefs is so necessary as for those who are, or are preparing to become, ministers of the Christian Church. They are often enthusiasts for religion, who have no personal doubts, but are eagerly interested in a great many questions, doctrinal and ceremonial and social; and their temptation is to take up the questions that interest them, which are secondary and derivative, and not really to study and test their foundations. Very likely they will themselves experience reactions and fall into fundamental doubts later in life. Certainly, if they are to be true to their high vocation, they will be constantly occupied in helping others who are in doubt. In either case they will find themselves paralysed if they have never explored their foundations. It is only those who know, from the ground upwards, what they believe and why they believe, who can

help either themselves or others in the time of stress. It is only those who are felt to have a real ground for their beliefs and a real sympathy with free enquiry whose help will be sought by those who need it, and it is pitiful to see how many there are among the professed ministers of Christ who, in an hour of popular discussion of some vital truth, are proved, by their perplexity and dismay, or by their uninstructed denunciations, never to have thought at all seriously or deeply about the most momentous questions."

This is not merely a process to be undertaken by those who are about to be ordained—it is to be continued throughout life.

It is essential that we should endeavour to know the thought of the most stimulating minds, and not only those who are, or have been, orthodox in their religious views. All exclusive preoccupation with one kind of mental activity, whatever it be, is a specialising of the mind, which tends to narrowness. We shall be debtors to the Greeks and Barbarians. We shall not think it a waste of time to read one novel a month, and it may even strengthen our sanity to have a Jane Austen or a John Buchan by our bedside. We shall read as much as we can on social matters, for the problems of poverty and unemployment and bad housing will be permanently on our consciences, and we shall realise that knowledge in these matters is as necessary as zeal. We shall beg, borrow or buy all that is written by Inge and Gore and Studdert Kennedy. They make a hotch-

potch which is quite digestible and most exhilarating. For papers and magazines: if we can afford "The Times" we will supplement it with "The Daily Herald," if not we will read "The Manchester Guardian," which is surely the penny daily with the highest tone, and which needs least supplementing. The old colonel who comes to church will let us read his "Spectator," and the young artist who does not can be persuaded to send us "The New Statesman," or "The Nation" a day or so late, and I suppose we ought to read one Church paper to know what is going on. There is a difficulty here, for the one that is most "newsy" is not very Christian, and the one that is most Christian is not very "newsy."

If we keep abreast—so far as we can—of new thought and new knowledge, we shall, I think, marvel to discover that when new light comes into the world which at first seems "dangerous" to the gospel of Christ, it is soon to be discovered that there is nothing in it alien to the Spirit of the Jesus of history, and often, as is the new science of psychology, we shall find what is now new was implied in the teaching of our Lord.

But a caution is necessary—not every new and popular cry, nor every new scientific statement is of God; while it is certainly our business to cross-question with great frankness traditional religious belief, it is equally our duty to do the same to the current dogmas of contemporary intellectual thought.

There are many who reject what is old simply

because it is old, and accept what is new simply because it is new. Neither the oracles of yesterday nor of to-day are necessarily of God. In the sphere of religion that means that we have no more right to impart verbal inspiration to Dr. Streeter than we have to St. Paul.

But above all, in our reading, we shall endeavour, I hope, to steep our minds in books such as come notably from Dr. Glover, that bring before us so vividly and with such intellectual force the Jesus of history and the Jesus in the experience of men. Why is it that we have no Anglican writers who compare with him in presenting us with the things that really matter? Our most intelligent authors are most concerned in proving the case for the Church, or attempting to reconcile different points of view. These things are secondary.

We shall not, I think, be very much interested in books of so-called Christian apologetics (I wish the word "apologetic" in connexion with Christianity could be abandoned once and for all). I used to read them very carefully before going to speak in the Park. They very nearly undermined my faith. On discovering that not a single question which they professed to answer was ever asked at question time in the Park, I was happily released from any further obligation to read them.

The man who writes Christian evidence seems, as someone has said, to be like the ladies in "Cranford," who put newspapers on the carpet to keep the sun out, and then had to move the newspaper in half an hour's time.

We shall also, I hope, burn and banish from our library those little *vade mecums* of the "full faith" that profess to explain the whole of God and His every purpose in fifty pages which include a preface by a Church dignitary. I am as fearful of those books getting into the hands of the ordinary intelligent layman as I am of his seeing the ordinary parish magazine. The preface to these little books generally pronounces them as eminently suitable for those about to be confirmed. To my thinking they are eminently unsuitable. I am afraid that the book suitable for those about to be confirmed has yet to be written, at least, I have not discovered it, though I have searched diligently for the last ten years.

While I am on the subject of literature, allow me to make a suggestion to those who are wont to publish their sermons. The sermons of some people (Dr. Temple, for instance) are well worth a large public, only there is no large public now willing to read sermons. If only those same sermons could be published without their opening text and under some title, like *Essays in Christianity*, there are many who would read them who are now prejudiced against reading them in the form of sermons.

So much, then, on the general subject of our reading. It is of the greatest possible importance. We must be able to hold our own in the pulpit, or in the smoking-room. To boast, as many clergy do, that they have no time to read is tantamount to confessing that they have their whole life's work in wrong proportion,

and are neglecting one of the primary duties attached to our profession.

I am not speaking in ignorance of the overwhelming cares and duties that crush parochial clergy. I have had my full share of those for nearly fifteen years, but I am convinced that we must find time somehow for our reading. There are days, of course, when the reading has to go by the board in answer to some human need that arises, but it should go with the greatest reluctance. In the years in which we cease to continue our education, we shall have very little to offer to anyone, and that of the thinnest description.

I hope our sense of what is fitting will also persuade us to use our study table for a task at which the clergy are not always at their best. There is no reason for our being careless in dealing with our correspondence. To leave letters unanswered day after day is indefensible. I am afraid it would be true to say that if a Rural Dean were good enough to send an invitation to breakfast to the clergy of his deanery, quite a considerable number would be guilty of the discourtesy of not even sending him a reply. This extremely bad habit comes, I fear, from want of business training and proper business supervision at the beginning of our career. One is sometimes tempted to wish that the Bishops would insist on every ordination candidate spending at least a year in some secular work. And the carelessness is not limited to correspondence. It is often very conspicuous in the way we handle the finance

entrusted to us. Men who have never had a dishonest thought in their minds have dealt with money with what can only be called criminal carelessness. I am afraid there is something amiss—some symptom of decay in the character of people who are casual and careless in dealing with their letters and other people's money, and surely we ought to be above reproach in these matters.

I do not think it is realised, either, how much help and encouragement can sometimes be sent through the medium of the postman. If you look into your own memory you will probably find that the encouragement, or the comfort, that some letter once brought is amongst your most cherished possessions. A letter to someone going through rough times, or far away or starting a new work, or a birthday or an anniversary remembered, are amongst those signs of human interest and affection which I think should come from the love of God—no one is too busy to think out acts like this, so simple and yet so grateful to those who receive them. It is generally the busy people who write them.

Very many hours in your working life will be spent in seeing, or what is called interviewing, people. There is no work which more needs the grace of God. There are four things essential :

1. That you should pray before the interview ;
2. That whoever comes should feel they are coming to someone who is human ;

3. That you should listen more than you talk ; and,
4. As important as (1), that you should genuinely expect that whoever is coming has got something to offer you.

Let me say a word on this fourth condition. If we are going to regard everybody who comes to see us as someone who is coming to be benefited by us, we shall not only be incapable of assisting, but we shall soon lose any human freshness we possess. Unless and until we can really feel that God is as likely to send that man or that woman to us for our sakes as well as theirs, we are not in a fitting condition to be of service. Let that prayer that is said before they come be a request that you may be able to learn your lesson and help as well. When people become "cases," or "patients," we cease to be in touch with them ; when they come as messengers we can get our message and sometimes give one in reply.

One so often hears the clergy saying, "So-and-so, who is in hospital, wants to see me," or "So-and-so, who is out of work, needs me." How seldom is there any idea of the lesson that may be learnt from the man in hospital, or the courage and patience that the man out of work may have to teach.

Above everything else, do let us remain humble and genuine. We are not infallible, not even the youngest of us. Our advice may often be wrong, therefore we will not give it easily, but we will, as fellow-pilgrims with other men

who seek the light, welcome all who come to us, pray for them, listen to them, learn of them, and, please God, give them something of ourselves besides. We must be very careful that we do not lose the art of listening as all men who talk much and easily are tempted to do.

The great men in Church and State are commonly supposed to be the men who do most of the talking. The few really great men whom I have met are distinguished chiefly by their power of listening. We are not likely to fail in our desire to be of service if we can cultivate the much-neglected art of listening.

At all times, and especially at times of controversy, the gift of listening must go hand-in-hand with that of the open mind. I hope we shall never be guilty of the sin of Caiaphas, which was that of the closed mind. Caiaphas was chiefly reprehensible because he would not listen. When truth came before him, he shut his ears and refused to listen. This is a terrible state of mind, but one that is not altogether uncommon. There is not lacking a certain type of clergy belonging to different schools who are united in nothing except in shouting "blasphemy" when something that men say is the truth comes before them for judgment. It is not necessarily our business to accept what others say as true, but it is our business to give it attention and the respect that is due to any opinion to which men passionately cling.

May the Lord preserve us from the sin of the closed mind.

A great deal of our time will be spent in

visiting those who live in the parish or district to which we are attached. It is a delicate business and needs all the grace we can summon to our aid. One generally returns from an afternoon's visiting in a more cheerful state than on starting out. Our welcome is uncertain. As in interviewing so in visiting. If we go ready to confer benefit, we had almost better remain at home for all the good we shall do. If we go with a genuine desire to enter into the cares and experience of those who live under the shadow of the church we shall not go in vain.

The object of visiting is not to make the docile more docile, but to become acquainted with everyone who is willing to know us, so that, in any hour of need, they may care instinctively to turn to us for spiritual assistance, or indeed, assistance of any kind ; but we are not relieving officers, and except in very exceptional circumstances in visiting, we do not deal with financial appeals. We are commissioned for the stupendous task of presenting every man perfect in Christ and standing for righteousness and social justice in the area where we work. The magnitude of our task should certainly keep us humble. We are to be known by all who are willing to receive us, rich and poor alike. We have no business to miss out certain houses as not being suitable for visiting. Why, for instance, pass by the public-house ? Publicans are often capital fellows from whom we may learn a great deal. Their children are usually particularly well-cared for, and supposing this

were not the case, there is all the more reason for a visit. Sometimes it is thought better not to visit those who are reputed to be hostile to religion. This is, of course, absurd. It is unfair and wrong merely to call on people who are not well off. An author of world-wide repute, with distinctly anti-clerical tastes, dates the beginning of his antagonism from the time when his vicar called on his servants without asking to see him.

When it is possible, our visiting should be done at a time when the men are at home, and we should ask to see the man. By most people it is supposed that when the parson calls, he has come to see the lady of the house. Old Bill opens the door, and when he sees who it is, he instinctively calls out before he disappears, "Missus, here's the parson." And other men who are told that the parson is in the hall think it best to retreat to the smoking-room while the ladies deal with him.

All this tends to identify us with the other sex and makes our profession appear to be unmanly. A brother parson who was present some time ago at a mothers' meeting heard himself thus spoken about by the lady superintendent, "Now, mothers, mind you do what Mr. — and the other ladies tell you." I do not think we ought to resent it if we are not wanted. It may depress us, but it ought not to make us think that those who do not wish us to enter the house are bad people. The old trick so often recommended by a certain Bishop of wedging your foot in the door when it is an

inch or so open so that it cannot be slammed in your face, seemed to me extremely ungentlemanly, unless it is felt that those who do not receive us will be eternally damned, in which case it is a praiseworthy and plucky effort, and should be done in Berkeley Square and Park Lane as well.

In our method of visiting there can be no distinction between the rich and poor; and the type of parson who thinks the poor ought to receive him, but that it is very kind of the Hon. Mrs. Bullion if she does, is most distressing. I often think how marvellously good, patient and kind-hearted the poor are towards us. We always seem to be missionising and visiting them, whereas, as a matter of fact, they do not need nearly as much pastoral care as their better-off neighbours. The nearer men and women are to a carpenter's bench, the more true this is.

The official mind has the souls of the poor more on its conscience than it need. Some of that conscious care might with advantage be transferred to the physical conditions under which he and his family have to work and live. I always notice with distress that whenever authority issues a special service of a missionary character it is suggested that it should be used at Evensong. Whether it be that the official mind really believes that the poor are further removed from the Kingdom of God than other people, or whether officialdom is afraid of upsetting the "quality" (if the new service displace their accustomed Mattins) I know not.

But it is a very evident fact to anyone who has worked east and west of Temple Bar that, if any missionising is going to be done, the morning congregation is the one that needs it.

If you go visiting in the spirit of our Lord and pray quite simply to yourself as you go, you need not think in advance what you are going to say, and you need not feel that it is all a waste unless a Confirmation candidate is the outcome. Remember you are not visiting for the mere sake of obtaining a Confirmation candidate.

What will be said if you visit in the right spirit will be the spontaneous utterance of a man who comes as a humble representative of Divine and human love. I do not believe the man who visits with this intent need ever worry, though his words may be poor and halting, his sympathy ill-expressed, his manner awkward and shy. The great and abounding joy of our profession is our belief that our Lord can make a good deal more of us than we can make of ourselves, and that He can—if we maintain intimacy with Him—use the poverty of our words and even our silent handshakes for His glory. I do not think I should have the courage to go on if, with all my heart and soul, I did not believe that. Forgive a personal anecdote which is only told to give encouragement to any who may feel they have little to give. I am quite clear the worst sermon that was ever preached was my own first attempt. I never heard anything so fatuous or dreadful. I lost both my nerve and my place on the

manuscript, and uttered disconnected platitudes to a bewildered East End audience for what seemed to me, and certainly to them, an eternity of time. The only one who tried to comfort me was an East End lady, who, seeing my misery, said, "Never mind, I daresay you'll get a little better when you've had a bit more practice." There was nothing to be said for that sermon whatsoever but this, that it had been prepared in an agony of prayer and with a passionate desire—such as is in the heart of any deacon—to be of service to God and man if He permit. For years the memory of that sermon haunted me like a ghost. It has ceased to now, for I have met a man who was in the church that evening who has told me, strange as it may sound, that it altered his life. He acknowledged it would be reckoned a very bad effort, "but," he went on, "it altered me." It is the most glorious thing in the world to realise in hours when the size of our task seems too big for people like ourselves, that God can take our tiny, mean offering, our little loaves and our two small fishes, and having blessed them they can provide for the hunger of the multitude.

We shall try, in our visiting, to understand so far as we can the point of view of those we are with: for instance, how next to impossible it is to attend Morning Service on Sunday when the children have to be looked after and the dinner cooked, and how some souls cannot be expected to thrive on Mattins. We shall long to tell them of our Lord and the Fellowship meal—and we shall, if we can.

We shall be there to help if we can—not to talk of our own busy life, nor to solicit a subscription for the vicar's general fund. We shall speak as naturally as we should in our own home, and we shall not think it a waste of time to sit with our host while he smokes his pipe, or undignified to smoke with him ; and we shall gladly pray in any house, at any hour, if those we visit would like to pray with us, and it will be just simple strong prayer out of our hearts embracing the needs and interests of those we are with. We shall try and say to God on their behalf what they deep in their hearts would like to say. We may add the Lord's Prayer and a Collect or so, but most of the prayer will come not through our lips but from their hearts.

I cannot understand the mentality of men who print books of prayer suitable for special occasions. I came across one the other day, and written, too, by a priest of great experience. There was one prayer suitable—so it was said—for recital to mourners around the body of their dear departed. It was a petitioning that the late departed might have his abode with Abraham. I conclude, if the departed had been of the other sex, Sarah might have been substituted. That sort of thing simply won't do. The tragedy of it is that it reveals the mind of an experienced parish priest as being utterly aloof from the situation.

In all our work we must endeavour to avoid professionalism. It always seems to me that the devil, in the course of a very experienced and not unsuccessful career, has discovered

that if he can make a parson proud of his own status and position he can undo a great deal of what might be good work.

There is nothing that so destroys our influence as an attitude that has become pompous, stereotyped and formal. If we cannot secure respect without overstraining our status at the expense of our humanity, it is a very bad look out. I have seen excellent curates become pompous vicars under the weight of their new authority, and even admirably natural and compelling vicars lose all their humour and spontaneity under the dignity of episcopal office. The bishop, vicar or curate who has to be perpetually reminding the people of his status will be in appalling contrast to his Lord—Who seemed almost unwilling that men should know His status until they had companied with Him as a Man among men.

We must keep young and simple-minded and encourage a few people to laugh at us whenever they see any signs of a false dignity, or a professional manner. A certain dignity must be ours, but that will be ours by the integrity of a disinterested life in God's service.

We must be ourselves and not imitate either the Bishop of London or Mr. Studdert Kennedy. We can present our own gifts with the cumulative force of a life's cultivation. We look merely foolish if we attempt anything that is not natural. If our nature is cheerful and what is called hearty, we can use it—without shouting and in season—to the glory of God. If we are not built on those lines, for pity's sake don't

let us pretend we are. It is, I think, the quiet folk who get farthest. People who are slapped on the back are not necessarily done good to—they are more often hardened against the clergy in proportion as they are hurt. Noisy breeziness is not necessarily akin to Godliness. I think gentleness is.

We must avoid, too, pretending by our manners that we are still laymen. The kind of layman whom we want to appeal to hates to hear us swearing, and does not think it is fair that we should do some of the things which he is a little ashamed of doing. It injures him quite definitely, I think. He expects us to be in some ways rather different from himself, and in some way, without losing our *joie de vivre*, we ought to be.

CHAPTER V

THE SPHERE OF MEN AND WOMEN

THERE is, I think, something amiss in a girl being prepared for Confirmation by a man who can know nothing, or almost nothing, of her life and circumstances. She very naturally does not desire to talk about the intimate things of her life with him. I do not think, either, that a curate or vicar is a suitable person to give spiritual counsel or direction to women. I know that in present circumstances this has to be done, and it is often done well, but the system is by no means ideal. It will be a long time before this is recognised, but meanwhile we clergy can at least give to all women the respect and the courtesy that is their due, and allow them as much initiative as is possible. The young deacon who thinks that every parish girl is going to fall in love with him, is an abomination. I know there are foolish women as well as men, and some desperately foolish girls, but it is a poor business to judge women by the few foolish ones we may meet ; it is much better to recognise how much the Church owes to them, and to reverence their gift of a moral courage and patience so far in

advance of our own, of an intelligence at least equal to our own, and of a faith and loving loyalty to our Lord that so often leaves us very far behind. Neither the Church nor the State will confront its large moral problem adequately without the assistance, full and unfettered, of women. But let me frankly confess that I think some time must elapse before women will be at their best in public affairs. New power has to become natural before it is used at its best. New authority needs assimilating in order that it may be used naturally. I hope I may be forgiven for saying that nothing frightens me more than the adequate woman who is pleased with her new authority, and nothing surprises and disappoints me more than the harsh judgment she is inclined to mete out to the members of her own sex.

Some of us are called to a life of celibacy, but most of us are, I believe, the better for being married sooner or later. The married parson is likely to have his outlook on life made healthier, and his love more human and deep. If a parson is strong enough to stand to his own deepest convictions, the ideal woman for him is the one who wants sometimes to challenge those convictions. Our wives are like bishops' chaplains—they are not much help if they see no fault in those they live and work with. It is immensely good for the clergy to be told, by someone who really cares for their deepest interests, when they are foolish; and it is further most stimulating that two partners in a great concern should see their

same Lord from different sides. Always remember that it is about the hardest thing in the world to be a parson's wife. If she is jolly, people say "she doesn't look a bit like a parson's wife"; if through grinding poverty (as is now often the case) she cannot be dressed smartly, then others say "she is just like a parson's wife!" Both terms are meant contemptuously. There is nothing harder for any woman than to steer, as a parson's wife has to, between being considered uninterested in her husband's work, if she is not present at every small parochial function, and being identified with a little clique if she is. And if added to her difficulties the parson is what is called "popular," then indeed we may give her our deepest sympathy. If he is "unpopular," then she, of course, must share his odium.

I am inclined to think that the bravest women in England are the hundreds and hundreds of vicars' and curates' wives who are suffering in silence to-day from abject poverty and yet are cooking, housekeeping, mending, nursing and sometimes acting as parish drudges. They get a great deal of abuse. I wish someone would write their praise in letters of gold! If it be your lot to work in surroundings and circumstances where a little comfort is possible, do put it upon your conscience that your home shall remain a place where a modicum of peace and seclusion and privacy is preserved for the woman you love, and, so far as you can, protect it; never let the vicarage be turned into an annexe to the vestry, and do not let the happy

girl who gave herself to you be driven against her will into a whirlpool of parochial activities.

If she loves the thing, well and good ; if she does not, well why should she ? There are many other ways of loving and serving God. And do remember that if it was God's will that you should marry, it is not also His will that you should neglect your wife and your children and your home. The romance that is in the heart of every woman can be crushed out of her if she sees the love and interest that once were hers, and which are her right, waning before the enthusiasm which the new Parochial Church Council excites. It is an ill day in the life of a parson when he is too engrossed to offer his wife those little courtesies which were gladly given in the happy days of courtship. It is a dreadful and devastating day for at least one soul at the parsonage when he forgets that, before the baby arrives and when the baby is ill, it is his duty and his joy to be by his wife's side. Our married life is not a question of either parish or home—it is a question of setting up in the parish a home in which at least two people live in some seclusion as well as in glad contentment, thanking God for His gifts, the greatest of which for each, is the gift of the other's love ; yet a home through the windows of which can be heard, and not remain neglected, the cry of a world in pain. If there is no love, no comradeship, no romance in the parsonage, it were better for the parson to refrain from preaching on Love.

In all probability women will be ordained

within thirty years from now. It may take longer than thirty years, but it will come, I think, whether the present generation likes it or not. If I may say exactly what I feel about it, I must confess that I am a little bewildered at the prospect ; but I am not certain that one ought to be bewildered, for I do not see anything but prejudice and practical difficulties in the way. I am perplexed, of course, at the thought of the adjustments and readjustments that will need to be made, but I refuse to be dismayed. I am not an active advocate of the ministry of women, but I am passionately anxious that they should be given the same opportunities for speech within consecrated buildings as are now given to laymen, and that, not because I wish to confer favour upon them, or merely because I think it is insulting that their gift of prophecy should be confined to the parish hall, but because I believe the Church is the poorer without their gift.

The idea of women clergy will be much less strange in ten years' time if the Bishops are able to carry out the resolutions which they framed as to women at the last Lambeth Conference. With those resolutions I am in the warmest agreement. In existing circumstances I should wish to see a woman who had been adequately trained attached definitely to the staff of every large parish, as an expert in the things about which men know next to nothing.

It will be said at once that nearly every parish has its own paid woman worker, but is she really trained, has she any real authority,

does she sit with the clergy at their meetings ? Does she shape the policy at all, is she allowed to do anything but act as a general drudge in decorating the church for Harvest Festivals, and carrying round the parish magazines ?

At the moment, the Church does not attract the younger woman such as it needs, because it offers no initiative, no prospects, and nothing but a starvation wage. Is there anything more pathetic than the usual parish worker, or anything more deplorable than the way in which she is treated, sometimes by the clergy and often by the congregation ? I know her limitations, I have worked with her for years ; I know she loves those little bits of authority that she wields in the absence of the clergy, but I know also she has had no training, she is generally desperately poor, she is often disgracefully patronised by the morning congregation, she has no future to look forward to.

The kind of enlightened person whom I wish to see attracted to Church work would be concerned not merely with jobs that no one else is willing to do, she would be chosen for the typical excellences of her sex ; she would prepare women and girls of every class for Confirmation ; she would really control the women's work in the parish ; she would give addresses in the church, she would hear confessions and give spiritual direction to those of her own sex who desired it. She would, too, do other things that are now denied her through the sheer prejudice that an out-of-date pagan attitude towards women begets. There will be, of

course, some jealousy and some difficulties if this proposal is generally carried out, but there will, I believe, be many advantages. The really competent and trained woman worker will relieve many from doing work which they are not very capable of doing, and will relieve the clergy from tasks which give them no enjoyment, because they realise perfectly well that they do not do them adequately.

There would be many less silly women, and some less silly parsons if, through such a plan as this and as a general rule, women's work was left in the far more capable hands of women, and the clergy were set free for their own work with men and boys.

CHAPTER VI

ON PREACHING

SERMONS are not listened to as gladly as they used to be: now they are tolerated rather than welcomed. It is not because there are no good preachers left. But this is a practical age, and people are very distrustful of moral exhortation: it seems to get so little done. Causes are not now judged by what even their best advocates have to say about them; men think for themselves.

There was a time when the Church was the only educative force in the country, so that the clergy spoke to an illiterate congregation. To-day the monopoly of wisdom is by no means confined to the pulpit, and the atmosphere of democracy is in the blood of the new generation. It takes the form of an almost unlimited assertion of the right of private judgment, though it is often forgotten that this unquestioned "right" should be conditioned by the pains that are taken to form the judgment. Nevertheless the claim persists, and it affects men's attitude towards the hearing of sermons.

Religion, too, has become more and more a matter of inward and personal experience.

Authority is questioned and distrusted. This was summed up as tersely as possible by the midshipman who wrote from the North Sea: "Our Padre is no damned good, he begins all his sermons with, 'This is the day on which the Church bids us . . .'"

Roughly speaking, the same thing is in the mind of the man in the pew, but if this is remembered, the preacher may still wield an enormous influence for good. There are certain things he does not require, and certain things he cannot do without. He need not, thank God, be an orator; it will be better for his soul's sake if he is not. Although the scholar who can preach simply has a rare power, no preacher need weight his sermons with profundity, and however much midnight oil he has expended, the sermon should not smack of it. He had much better not work up to periods of heated exuberance, dotting his manuscript beforehand with "ff" like the unreal instructions against the last verse of a combative hymn; nor need he resort to histrionic devices of lowered voice or long silences. It would be much better to let any tendency to slang, elaborated humour or shouting be rigorously repressed. He had better not talk down to children, or up to the small minority of his congregation whose intellects are coldly critical. His words are for those who are hard pressed in the difficult business of Christian living. He had better postpone as long as possible the day of preaching without manuscript. Many of the best preachers, who are thought to preach *ex*

tempore, read their sermons. He must avoid imitating the style of his favourite preacher. It would, for instance, be quite fatal even for Dr. Inge to try and preach like Mr. Studdert Kennedy. It is not advisable to denounce those who do not attend church in the presence of those who do. It is not necessary to say "Brethren," or "Beloved," or even "My Friends," and it had better be remembered that to begin a sermon with the words "The point of view of the Church has always been" is almost fatal in the hearing of the modern congregation.

The preacher must talk of the things he knows something about and in a language that the people can understand. I do not think that the average member of an ordinary congregation has the faintest idea of the meaning of the words his parson uses. I am certain the stranger has not. There is nothing more needed than a new vocabulary for the pulpit and for Confirmation classes. Some of the old words had better be left unsaid. Most of them need translation, they are as Greek or Latin to simple people, that is, to three-quarters of both the morning and evening congregation. The current pulpit phraseology of religion is bankrupt—by this I mean it is impossible to trade with; I am not denying its worth in the science of theology, but in daily life its purchasing power is almost nil. Curiously enough, it is at its worst in the Salvation Army. I often think that they could change England if they would suffer Mr. Clutton Brock, in collaboration with

Mr. Edward Woods, to change their vocabulary. Some preachers seem to be under the impression that those to whom they speak have all had the benefit of a year at Cuddesdon or at least at Knutsford. Great-sounding words and phrases, that have no doubt a noble place in the science of theology, are hurled at the heads, or rather over the heads, of uninstructed people, and often by clergy who have a very imperfect understanding themselves of what they mean.

Let me make myself a little plainer. Words like "Incarnation," "Sanctification," "Justification," "Mediation," and even phrases like "The Blood of the Lamb" or, indeed, the "Holy Ghost," mean no doubt a great deal to those who use them from the pulpit, but they are not understood by the majority of those who are listening. I am not suggesting that these same words and phrases should not be retained where theologians meet together, but that they should be used sparingly in the pulpit, and that even then they should be accompanied with some simple statement as to what they really mean.

An excellent discipline for the "would-be" preacher is to read a work on theology, or the able writings of someone like the late Dr. Illingworth, and then to attempt in his own study to find a language for what he has read which people who were not deeply read in theology would understand. Most theologians who speak and write delight to say they are addressing themselves to a public of ordinary people, whereas, as a matter of fact, they are about as intelligible to those they fondly

imagine they are interesting, as Professor Einstein is to me. The man who hopes to give assistance from the pulpit must choose his words from those that are in current use. Nor can a man hope to make his utterances intelligible unless he knows something of the mental condition and attitude of those who will be listening.

All too often, the preachers of the Gospel may know the truth of what they affirm, but they do not know the lives or the thoughts of those to whom they are trying to bring it. Men do not ask for a new gospel, they would be content with the old if only they could listen to it expressed in terms related to their own experience and the meaning of life.

Remember that the religious outlook of most people is largely influenced by the circumstances and conditions of their lives. The Eton boy will accept, even if it does not interest him, the statement that "God is Love," not so the son of a pauper. We must know how the people in the pew are thinking. The preacher must have contact with them before he can speak to them with power. The suggestion is frequently made for colleges of itinerant preachers who would visit parishes and deliver sermons. No doubt the matter of their sermon would be excellent, but good matter is not necessarily effective matter, unless together with its excellence there is also an intimate knowledge of the conditions under which the hearers are living, the problems that confront them, and how those problems can be surmounted. That could

hardly be expected from a preacher who arrived on Saturday and left early on Monday morning.

We must know our people. Every man called to the ministry should have as an inevitable part of his training, at least a grounding in practical psychology. There is such a thing in a congregation as an average mentality towards religion. We have, if we can, to raise the average, but we cannot do that unless we begin where people are: we have to speak to that average in a human dialect. When we forget this, we may give a great impression of intelligence, but we shall not really commend our cause because, though many of the congregation would not own it, most of them will really not understand what on earth we are talking about. There are some people who like being mystified, but I do not think it is good to encourage them. Strange and high-sounding language poured out in a torrent is rather like the comfortable sound of rain to a man who is sitting by his own fireside. The torrent will doubtless do good, but it won't affect him, and it is pleasant to listen to. There were many people who did not understand a word of Welsh, who felt a pleasurable glow of excitement when, some years ago, a certain Bishop in his enthusiastic defence of the Welsh Establishment would break into his native language. There was always tumultuous applause, "Magnificent!" people would say, but really it did not help them very much, because for most people the arguments stopped when the Welsh began. It is so with any

preacher who strains after effect, and uses language not generally understood. A few will enjoy it, but for all the good achieved, for the lives it ought to have converted, for the Christian tasks it gets done, it simply isn't worth the paper it is written on, or the time it takes to prepare and to deliver. Such speech would not have come from Jesus Christ, Who knew the hearts of men. He knew no jargon of technical terms. He would pass by the grand classical speech of religion which was fast becoming a dead language to the living world, and spoke, with the Father and Mother tongue, the dialect of the human heart.

Men and women are not fired to enthusiasm by being asked to resemble Abraham, or other rugged people in the Old Testament. All sarcasm and bitterness and mere denunciation should be avoided in the pulpit. There is often need for moral indignation, but that is quite distinct. No cutting cynical phrases will help the Kingdom of God, and no man is of Christ who talks slightly of those who are loyal members of other Christian Churches, or indeed of any who are the adherents of other religions which seem to bring them near to God. One further warning—it is not always either necessary or advisable to end the sermon on your paramount Church interest. There are some who hammer Sunday by Sunday on the same ecclesiastical anvil, small missionary interests, confessions, more frequent communion, family prayers, Church reform, and other kindred subjects. These things are all to be spoken about

in their time and in their place, but they are not the necessary conclusion of every sermon.

The chief concern of the preacher should be to declare God; the man who desires to give a live message must himself be alive unto God, and this does not happen on Saturday evening because the parson wants to prepare a sermon for the following day. The process of becoming alive unto God is essential for the preacher, but it has nothing directly to do with the preparation of sermons. The things that keep men alive unto God are their constant looking into the face of Jesus Christ, their disciplined prayer, their careful reading, their life of service. These things are independent of whether we have to preach or not, but it so happens that no man can give a live message unless he himself is alive unto God. The preparation of a sermon is the committing to paper the things about God and His purpose which seem to need emphasis—as the result of the preacher's own research into the things of God and his knowledge of those to whom he is speaking. If the life is devoted and the intelligence encouraged, the message that is needful will come.

We have to be careful not to spend our times of devotion and reading in trying to discover points for sermons. I have known a good many hard-pressed parish clergy who have lost all the benefits that they might have had from a retreat, because they have spent most of the time listening to the addresses with a view to their own sermons for the next Sunday. It is a pity, I always think, that students at theological

colleges are encouraged to take notebook and pencil with them to their quiet days: it is liable to start what may become a disastrous habit, as we who still have to fight against it know. In so far as it is true that it is harder to missionise the clergy than any other body of men, it is, I fear, because we have become so accustomed to listening to sermons either for the purpose of criticising or of repeating them in our own. We have been outside the range of their converting power. Times of devotion and study are for no other purpose than that we should be alive unto God. He who is will be able to declare God through Jesus Christ.

The preacher who will commend our Lord is he who is really simple and genuine, who does not ask for tasks to be done that he does not do himself. He will be alongside of his people, fellow-pilgrim with them in the search for truth. He will not think that he has discovered all truth. He will not attempt to pretend that there are no mysteries which have not been revealed to him. He will not be ashamed of admitting that there are problems he cannot answer. It is the belief of most people that no intellectual doubts ever shadow the soul of the parson. "If only I had a faith like yours" is the phrase that is used. Why shouldn't they know by the humility of the clergy's pulpit speaking that they, too, have been again and again in doubt and difficulties, and that they, too, have had periods when, like their Lord, they murmur, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

It has come to be believed by many people that it is wrong to doubt, whereas all who have won a living and creative faith in God are bound to go through the Valley of Perplexity. There are many who think there is something wrong with them because they doubt, whereas they are really passing down the way that leads to God. And how much of this conception is due to the cocksure way in which preachers dismiss the largest problems and seem to suggest that God does not approve of intellectual doubt. The attitude of humility that one desires to discover in the preacher is not that of the man who is always apologising for his own view, but that of a man who gives his views respectfully for what they are worth, and knows that some who hear them know more than he does, if only because they have served longer in the school and workshop of Christ. He will respect his congregation, he will remember that it is not necessary or likely that all should think or feel as he does, or find their faith confirmed as he has found his. He will offer what he has as humbly and respectfully as he can, realising that his offering would be much larger if he knew the manifold way in which his people were coming to the knowledge of their Saviour, and had their experience as well as his own. He will not suggest that his is a monopoly of wisdom. He will realise that God has many ways of making Himself known to many people. He will avoid that hard unsympathetic insistence on his own path, as being the only way that leads to God. He

may be convinced that for him it is the way, and such things as come to him as he treads it may confirm him in his conviction, but he has no right to say, "This only is the road, take this because it is good for me, accept this because it was proved efficacious by the men of the Oxford or the Evangelical Movement, this is what you must do, this is how you must feel, and this is how you must express your feelings, or something is wrong." I would rather be guilty of being a little too vague than of the charge of being a little too definite in matters that pertain to God. It is the part of a preacher to make people think : it is a primary Christian duty.

The parable of the ferment of leaven in a mass of meal is a vivid forecast of our Lord's effect on the minds of men. He found a world of established ideas, and the effect of His coming was a struggle between inheritance and experience. "It was said to them of old times—but I say unto you."

Our Lord would have no quarrel with anyone who struck out a new line or was searching for a new truth. There is no one who rejoices more in the adventurer. "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven," He once said to an exploring mind. The very existence of Jesus, says Dr. Glover, has been to humanity one of the greatest stimulants to thought : and one of the greatest factors in developing the human mind.

Historically, one of the marks of the Early Church was that, though it did not come from

the upper ranks of society and had not the highest culture, it mastered the ancient world all along the line. A man awakened to one set of interests is more apt to understand another. The redeemed man is always ahead of what he was before ; and the more fully he is remade by Jesus Christ the more he goes ahead. Conquering and to conquer is a true description of the Christian soldier as well as of his leader. Remember, Jesus is the Man Who has stirred mankind to its depths and set the world on fire.

The new preaching, the new evangelisation for which the world waits, will, I believe, be concerned with holding up before men God as known in Jesus Christ—just as truth is held up without the need of comment or flattery. Men of certain conditions and men who think will see and acclaim it. We who know Jesus will hold Him before men much in the same rugged simple way as did the Evangelists. It is amazing that in their narrative they neither paid Him compliments nor offered sympathy ; they spoke of Him ; they told things about Him ; and left it at that—except that later they died for Him. They seemed almost afraid of explaining. They saw the Truth and they may have known that Truth in the end must prevail.

That is how we must preach Christ.

The longer I live the more certain I become that if we can induce the men and women who admire Jesus Christ (and that is practically everyone) to do more than admire—to attempt to live in His spirit, they will come to know

God and they will discover that state of Christian orthodoxy into which it will please the Spirit of God to call them.

It may not be the orthodoxy that is ours, but none the less it will be that into which God has called them. We need not worry as to whether they make their confession or how often they come to their Communion. Some will and some will not ; some will need their Communion often, to others it will be more real occasionally. My point is that these things are not especially our business, though naturally we would try to advise in the case of the young and in the case of others who need our advice.

If I have seemed to neglect the duty of the clergy to preach on large social problems or matters such as the bearing of the problem of unemployment and the like, I have not done so intentionally, but I maintain that if a sermon is filled with the Fatherhood of God and the Spirit of Jesus Christ it will of necessity provide the dynamic which will destroy the greatest sin that stalks the world to-day—the sin of separation.

Our sermons will not be comforting : how can they be ? They will be aflame with the burning passionate love of God—they will be spoken in a natural voice—simply and yet with conviction—and in a language understood by the people.

They will come from our own daily prayer and study and Christian adventure, and they will go—we know not whither. About that we need not worry.

CHAPTER VII

NEW IDEALS IN PARISH WORK

HAVE we got the organisations that are of service to the people, or are they only those we have told them they ought to like?

It is wrong, I am sure, to impose organisations on reluctant parishioners because we think they ought to be good for them.

We may make suggestions, but we must allow those who are mainly interested to choose what they think will be of service.

For instance, we may think the Church of England Men's Society and the Church Lads' Brigade altogether admirable—our men and boys may not. We may think these societies ought to help—they may know they won't. I know a clergyman so ignorant of the psychology of youth and so devoted to the Church Lads' Brigade that he suspects a propensity to savage vice in any boy who will not enrol in its ranks. His boys want Scouts, but he won't give in, and I maintain he is wrong, and we shall be wrong if we do likewise.

There are, I fear, hundreds of dead branches of various accredited Church societies scattered over the country which are not allowed to be

officially reported as defunct because the vicar thinks it would not be seemly if there was no branch of this or that society in the parish.

It is better, I think, to close down and start something fresh than to go on attempting to lash moribund guilds, which no one needs, into a mild activity.

Parochial organisations exist not to make the docile more docile, but to hold and to help those who are most in need of incentives to decent living and Christian service, and for that reason I beg that whatever is started shall not impose at the outset a communicant test—as the condition of membership.

And before I make a constructive suggestion for a new kind of parish guild may I say a word about parish organisations as a whole? They ought not to claim too much time from their adherents.

I am inclined to think that in these difficult days there is a good deal to be said for Churchmen leaving their coteries of like-minded companions and allowing their Churchmanship to swell the common stock of effort towards reform which is being made by civic authority and citizens at large. I am not certain that we have not attempted, in the past, to shelter our communicants too much from the rude noise of the world, and I do not think they are better in consequence. There is a good deal of machinery which has been created for good purposes in municipal and civic life which is either not working or working badly for lack of men and women with moral courage, high

purpose and a sense of civic honour. It is here, I am certain, that Christian virtues are needed, and it is here rather than at those somewhat inconclusive meetings for communicants only (whose main decision is to arrange the date of the next meeting) that the best opportunity for a Churchman's Christian service lies. And this means that instead of begging able Churchmen to assist us in running boys' clubs or taking round the parish magazine, we should frankly say: "Go to your club or trade union or political meeting and let your witness be made there."

Anything that retains Christianity as a static force in the parish hall, when it ought to be a dynamic force in the rough and tumble outside, is to be regretted in days of crisis such as these. For instance, I would wish to see those who are anxious for the restoration and protection of women and girls prefer to struggle for a seat on the local Watch Committee rather than enjoy their safe seat in the chair of the neighbouring Church society for preventive and rescue work. Or again—might it not be well for the members of the parochial branch of the Church of England Men's Society to sacrifice, at any rate occasionally, the pleasure that an attendance at the monthly meeting affords, and as their main interest to carry their zeal for Christian fellowship into regions where there is much enthusiasm for fellowship but little for organised Christianity?

I think our close Church meetings to discuss, let us say, the tendency to irreligion in the young people of the present generation have had their

day—a useful day no doubt it was—but their continued pre-eminence in the life of Churchmen to-day, when Christianity itself is at stake, seems to me to encourage complacent companionship in a clique rather than courageous effort to test and confirm faith and to contribute moral virtues where the din of battle is most fierce and its issues most surely in the throes of decision.

And if the answer is that they are not strong enough to stand alone, I would reply: “Then Christianity, or rather our presentation of it, has no useful place in the world to-day.”

And here may I suggest as an ideal for parish work that there should be, under the control of the Parochial Church Council, one main activity in the parish, and one only, and that a Guild of Fellowship open to all who care to call themselves members of the congregation, and with no further test? Its aim would be fellowship in Christian service, recreation and social intercourse.

The obligations incurred on admission would be a promise of attendance so far as possible at four quarterly meetings of the Guild and a readiness to consider a request for service from the Council of the Guild.

Around that Central Fellowship—controlled by a Council elected by the members themselves—should centre all the smaller activities that the parish needs: the men’s and boys’ clubs, the girls’ guilds, the debating society, the dancing and singing classes, the Scouts, the model Sunday School, and other efforts which cater for those who are not as yet in the Fellow-

ship. But this is the point—every smaller activity should owe a primary allegiance to the Guild of Fellowship, on whose Council it shall be represented. The Council is the G.H.Q. of the parish. It can look at the parish and its needs as a whole ; it can regulate the number of socials and arrange all the smaller fixtures with a view to co-ordinating activities, preventing overlapping, and it can scrap all small organisations that are not needed or are ineffective. There is one further important rule that should be laid down as a principle—no member of the Fellowship may assist in the control of more than one sub-society. That prevents “bossy” people bossing everything in the parish. They can do their worst in one side show, but only in one. I know this kind of Fellowship can work and can work extraordinarily well. It works in one parish that I know intimately—it has revolutionised the Church life. It has its paid secretary, its office and its bureau of service, and nearly one thousand members who pay two shillings a year, the vast majority of whom are doing bits of service not only just in the parish but all over London. At the last quarterly meeting of that Guild of Fellowship there was no hall in the parish that could hold the members, and an adjournment had to be made to the church. The members have a badge, the wearing of which is entirely voluntary.

This really is a Fellowship with a basis broad enough to hold any and every one, and with a spirit warm enough to remind one of a labour

meeting rather than a gathering of respectable Church-people. It is the best weapon for getting the right kind of spirit into a parish that I have as yet encountered. In its comprehensiveness and its spirit of service and fellowship it can, I believe, bind together everyone, and co-ordinate all the activities in a way in which it is hard for the Electoral Roll of the Parochial Church Council to achieve the same results.

Finally, I pass to another activity which, I am certain, is in need of the reformer's hand. The usual parish magazine. What is the matter with it? It does not "bite." It is hard to understand what public it is aimed at, though, I suppose, the calendar of Church festivals and the short stories about choir boys who die young—largely I suspect from neglect of football and too close attendance in the sacristy—does appeal to the milder portion of a congregation.

To begin with, I should alter the word magazine to review—it is easier to get articles written for it if this is done. People like writing for monthly reviews, but they don't, alas, for parish magazines. Parish magazines are under a cloud—they've had a bad run. Then I should change the cover. Church bells outside suggest mildness within; nor do I like to see the hours of Mattins and Evensong advertised quite so aggressively before you have turned over the first page. It reminds me of a visiting-card for clergy someone once tried to sell me, which, beside the vicar's name, contained a list of the hours of his Sunday services. I thought it peculiarly ungentlemanly!

And I dislike the vicar's monthly letter which begins "My dear people," and ends "Yours faithfully in Jesus Christ." It gives an air of unreality to a letter which is addressed to everyone in general and to no one in particular.

I should prefer to see that letter disappear and a series of notes—by the vicar if you like—take its place. This would have the further advantage of enabling whoever wrote the notes to avoid those seasonable messages in appropriate language that a letter from the vicar always seems to entail. And I abominate those inside pages of the magazine which, I suppose, are sent round by some well-meaning Church society every month.

I should suggest in our reformed magazine that friends who can write should be asked to write on general topics of public interest from a Christian viewpoint. It is also well to know that nearly all the editors of monthly reviews and Church organs will give their leave for their articles to be reprinted if the source be acknowledged.

There could be reviews of books—our monthly reading, for instance—poetry—a good story—a page of humour and even, if desired, acrostics, though it is to be hoped that the answers need not necessarily be always Biblical names or characters.

Of course the doings of the parish would be chronicled, but I suggest that matters merely parochial should be printed in smaller type. The casual reader cannot be expected, and ought not to be encouraged, to wade through a

page and a half in large print on the billiard handicap in the boys' club, or how the G.F.S. nearly won, but ultimately lost, the shield at the Crystal Palace.

A need which I am certain is long overdue, is an attempt to rescue the usual parish magazine from its dullness and trivialities and to bring it into the arena of decent Christian literature—the need for which is so urgent to-day.

It ought to be—that magazine—a monthly challenge to high living and high thinking—it should bring all matters of public importance to the touchstone of Christ. It ought to be concerned with the making of citizens; it can also be parochial without being narrow. It can be a magnificent tract in capable hands, but usually we have allowed that poor old magazine to become an inartistic chronicle of small activities of no interest to anyone except to those who find their names in print because they sent flowers for the Harvest Festival decorations or made the arrangements for the mothers' annual outing to Blackpool.

And this new kind of magazine can be made to pay, too, for many tradesmen of goodwill will advertise in it, and many people will be glad to buy it if it's worth buying and if, for instance, it is interesting enough to be readable in the local free library. If it does not pay as a piece of propaganda it is worth the extra money it costs, and if finance is still a difficulty, several parishes might combine together—best of all a rural deanery centre—to have a really decent piece of Christian literature.

I have not attempted to deal with the reforms necessary within the Church and at its worship. My plea in this direction is that parish churches to-day should attempt to cater for the whole life of those who live in their shadow—should offer them not only the Blessed Food for the soul but refreshment for the minds and recreation for the bodies of the teeming masses in crowded cities and towns. Reforms are years overdue, I am certain, not that the Church may be popular, but that it may follow in the footsteps of its Divine Master, Who came that we might have life and have it more abundantly.

In conclusion. Everything, I think, goes back to what I ventured to lay down at the beginning. When the morale of the Church is higher ; when she is more ready for a splendid gamble ; when we ourselves, priests and laity, are kneeling more completely at the feet of our Lord in earnest request for a larger measure of His Spirit, then the world will be at our feet and we shall save its soul—through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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